DAILY NEWS TUESDAY, JULY 11, 1967 36

Doc Thinks That JFK Had Gland Woes

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Back in the dim, red dawn of time when John F. Kennedy was battling Lyndon B. Johnson for the 1960 Democratic Presidential nomination, the Johnson forces tried to make health an issue by contending that Kennedy suffered from Addison's disease.

A pathologist at the University of Kansas asserted in the Journal of the American Medical Association yesterday that Johnson was most likely right.

Dr. John Nichols said that Kennedy's operation at the Hospital for Special Surgery here Oct. 21, 1954, was performed to correct effects of the glandular disease.

The Kennedy Version

At the time, Kennedy said the operation was needed to alleviate back injuries he sufered during World War II. It was a spinal fusion procedure involving the insertion of a metal plate.

Nichols described an article written by a surgeon on the hospital staff in 1955 which described an operation for Addison's disease on an unidentified 37-year-old man on Oct. 21, 1954.

"It is most unlikely that two persons with the same age and clinical history of the late President would have undergone similar surgery on the same day and returnet on exactly the same time four months later for removay of the plates," said Nichols.

Medical Coincidence

Kennedy returned to the hospital on Feb. 10, 1955, for removal of a steel plate. It was the same day that the man described in the article returned to the hospital for removal of a metal plate.

Addison's disease affects the adrenal glands, causing an insufficiant adrenal excretion. It was once fatal, but has been easily treatable with cortisone and other steroid drugs for almost 10 years. In some cases, surgery may be required which could be similar to a back injury operation.